**World Vision’s contribution**

**WHRGS/GA/RES/75167: Call for submission for two reports on the issue of child, early and forced marriage**

*(covering January 2020 – January 2022)*

1. **What measures have been taken to implement the recommendations of the last report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/75/262)?**

World Vision International (WV)’s focus continued to be on mobilising millions of people and exercising a coordinated pressure around the world to end sexual violence against children and child marriage. We called for donor governments to sustain aid funding, and highlighted the primary role of children in preventing girls and boys from getting married and losing out on education.[[1]](#endnote-2)

In May 2021, 35 WV offices engaged in the *Just Married* mobilisation on ending child marriage. Since 2017[[2]](#endnote-3), *Just Married* was WV’s highest-engaged global moment both by WV offices and supporters, involving nearly 100,000 children and young people and securing over 80,000 petition actions. Influencers such as US actresses Melissa Joan Hart and Sal Stowers and Mexican pop singer Fey joined WV’s global and local call to decision-makers to end child marriage. A short video from 10-year-old Shemema from Ghana, reciting her poem called *“I want to marry, but I’m not in a hurry”* went viral with over 1.6 million views across social media.

1. **What legislative actions have you taken to address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage?**

* In Niger, WV ran a sensitisation campaign in the Maradi and Zinder areas that includes public awareness raising on existing legislation, reaching 12,000 people. In a public statement, the Prefect of the Guidan Roumdji Department, Saley Djigo, reiterated his administration’s support in the fight against child marriage. *‘All marriages that will be celebrated before the bride and groom are of marital age will be annulled’,* Djigo said.
* In Zimbabwe, WV and partners worked with the government to amend the country’s Education Act, aiming to lift the ban on pregnant girls and young mothers in schools, making it illegal to expel them. The Education Amendment Act was finally assented by the president and came into force on March 6, 2020, bringing a conclusion to what had been a long advocacy process. Moreover, WV’s Nyanyadzi area programme supported five children to participate in the National Parliament debate, where children raised their voice on ending CEFM and lobbied decision makers to align related laws with the constitution. This engagement along with other actors resulted in approval of the children’s amendment bill by the Cabinet, pushing it forward within the policy making process.
* In Ghana, as a result of strong advocacy in communities where World Vision has programming activities, 45 paramount and divisional chiefs imposed sanctions on perpetrators of child marriage and attended to issues of teenage pregnancy and other child protection issues.
* In Ethiopia, as a result of WV advocacy efforts together with local leaders in Jaira, Chinchaye and Degola communities with high rates of child marriages, local authorities agreed and produced by-laws that prohibited children under 18 years to get married. Local authorities then approved and enacted Child Marriage Free Community Act in their respective communities.
* In Mozambique, a Child Marriage Law in place bans and criminalizes child marriage. However, it lags regulation and implementation Faith actors trained by WV contributed to exerting constructive pressure for full implementation of the law by way parallel events, such as interfaith prayers to end CEFM.
* In North West Syria, where WV has an emergency response in place, WV advocated for the issues of ending child marriage, child labour and increasing investment in remedial education to be part of the strategic priority of the *No Lost Generation* advocacy strategy, including for Syria V Brussels Conference (March 2021). As technically strong co-chairs of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Pillar, WV has led on the process, being one of the penholders of the strategy.

**3. What measures have you adopted to support girls that are already married or in informal unions? Do those measures contribute to:**

b. Protect their economic security and that of their families, including equal access to inheritance and property, social protection, employment and financial services?

In Bangladesh, through Nobo Jatra project WV trained 21,000 women living in ultra-poverty in basic entrepreneurial literacy skills; over 14,000 women have received start-up capital of US$188 to help them launch small businesses. On average, women who participate in this training have almost-doubled their income (to 42% higher than baseline incomes). Powerful social change is spurred as some women acknowledge the pain they endured as child brides and see the link between their own experience of child marriage and the cycle of poverty that they, their husbands and their children now face.

d. Ensure their access to health services, including services to sexual and reproductive health?

In Bangladesh, WV works to address the unique needs of already-married adolescent girls. For example, in Chunkuri village, citizens were equipped to advocate for improved reproductive and maternal health services at their local clinic. As a result, Chunkuri mothers now receive pre/postnatal care in a clean, modernised government facility, rather than travel to a private clinic many kilometers away. The clinic also provides culturally appropriate family planning services that educate mothers and fathers on the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies (HTSP). It is estimated that HTSP counselling could prevent as many as one-third of maternal deaths by enabling women to delay their first pregnancy to at least the age of 18, space their pregnancies by 2-5 years, avoid unplanned pregnancy and limit childbearing to their healthiest years.[[3]](#endnote-4)

**4. What actions do you take to support girls and women affected or at risk of child, early and forced marriage?**

To effectively end or reduce violence against children, WV in its operation areas applies its flagship [Child Protection & Advocacy model](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Child_Protection_Advocacy_PM.pdf) that promotes a systems approach and addresses the root causes of violence. The model integrates multisectoral strategies that are contextualised but also employed simultaneously in the most tactical way to address the complex driving factors of violence, including CEFM. Through these integrated strategies, that include programme approaches and models , such as [Channels of Hope (CoH) for Child Protection](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/CoH%20Child%20Protection_2020_FINAL.pdf), [Citizen Voice and Action](https://www.wvi.org/social-accountability/our-approach), [Celebrating Families](https://www.wvi.org/church-and-interfaith-engagement/celebrating-families), Community Change[[4]](#endnote-5), and others, WV works in partnership with formal and informal actors to strengthen the protective environment for girls and boys. WV’s [Child Protection & Advocacy model](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Child_Protection_Advocacy_PM.pdf) is now used in 46% (686) of programmes across 49 countries where WV is active, an increase from 490 programmes in 2019.

Examples of systems thinking applied in WV programming include:

* In Bangladesh, WV with its 2015-2022 Nobo Jatra project[[5]](#endnote-6) reaches over 200,000 households and 856,116 direct beneficiaries. The project integrates income and economic strengthening alongside behaviour change interventions, facilitating discussions with 10,076 couples around marriage and family life, shared responsibilities in parenting and financial management. Such discussions encourage men in particular to ask tough questions about masculinity and human dignity.[[6]](#endnote-7) The project also uses WV’s Citizen Voice and Action social accountability approach and *‘Bride Not Before 18’* campaign to encourage the strengthening of laws and service delivery. Empowering young women and girls to advocate for themselves is an essential part of this campaign. The project’s life-skills education component, implemented in 142 schools, reaches 16,600 adolescents – all with their own incredible stories of transformation and empowerment. To ensure sustainability, WV collaborates with Bangladesh Department of Education to incorporate the sessions into the standard school curriculum.
* In Uganda, faith leaders equipped through Channels of Hope methodology, identify and provide psychosocial support and counselling to the most vulnerable children, such as child-headed households, girls at risk of early/forced marriage and pregnancy, children with disabilities and unaccompanied and separated children. As the lockdown ended, faith leaders organised and supported mass ‘back to school’ campaigns through community messaging, door-to-door visits and radio appearances. A tracking register was also developed to monitor at-home attendance of girls and boys and ensure that they stay in school.[[7]](#endnote-8) At the same time, 21 Children Peace Clubs’ activities have enabled children to become champions of behavioural change in their communities, helping to significantly reduce cases of SGBV and CEFM despite the pandemic.
* In Ghana, 800 faith leaders have been empowered to advocate and speak out to end marriage and other forms of violence against children in their communities. These faith leaders (both male and female) are actively engaging communities and their congregations in 630 communities across Ghana. Similarly, in Somalia, as a result of WV’s Channels of Hope interventions religious leaders conducted awareness raising activities on fistula, FGM, girl child marriage and GBV. The religious leaders managed to reach a total of 2162 people (1225M & 937F) with outreach preaches conducted in Masjids & Madarasa.
* In fragile contexts like Afghanistan, WV’s community-based work, focusing on faith leaders as agents of change, has seen tremendous success. In response to increased risks of CEFM during the pandemic, WV supported the Department of Religious Affairs and Hajj to form a Provincial-Level Faith Leader Forum in Herat, Badghis and Ghor provinces. The 23 members – 13 male, 10 female – acted as conduits and agents of change. Together, they mobilised other key community members to promote child rights and protection in their respective communities. Religious institutions have also been engaged through partnerships with 50 madrassas in Ghor province. Through faith leaders, 32 early and forced marriage cases were prevented in 2020.[[8]](#endnote-9) At the same time, through Community Change intervention, WV trained 636 imams and 350 school teachers, female shuras (elder groups) and Child Protection Action Network members to lead community dialogue on issues of violence against women and CEFM, linking these back to core teachings of the Qur’an. So far, seven communities have launched campaigns countering child marriage.[[9]](#endnote-10)
* In Mozambique, faith leaders participated in public, inter-faith advocacy events during which specific calls on COVID-19, child marriage and the military conflict in Cabo Delgado were made to Government representatives in attendance. This was in response to the annual review of the Government’s Five Year Program (2019-2024) which determines the country’s development priorities. Implementation is tracked via the Government’s Economic and Social Plan and State Budget.
* In December 2021, WV supported young people to engage in preparations of the global Solutions Summit on Ending Violence Against Children and the UNICEF Global conference in children and young people. The child delegates spoke on issues of child marriage and discrimination-based violence. As part of the Digital Platform, youth from Brazil engaged in child-led research on ending violence against children. Children were also part of the WV strategy in channelling U.S. foreign policy and assistance so young people can change their world and call for a free-violence society.

**5. What measures are in place to facilitate access by girls and women at risk and for already married girls and women to protective mechanisms and services?**

* [World Vision’s new Health and Nutrition Sector Approach 2020–2030](https://www.wvi.org/health/world-visions-sector-approach-health-nutrition-2020-2030)–*‘It’s Time To Thrive’*–includes clear commitments to leverage the role of health systems and providers, particularly at the community level. The initiative’s aim is to promote caring and nurturing behaviours towards children and to support young girls at risk of child marriage and sexual violence. The shift in WV’s strategy followed the results of a 2019 groundbreaking [study](https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/it-takes-world/it-takes-community-health-workers-end-violence-against-children) with 412 community health workers in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Kenya and Tanzania, regarding their roles in preventing, detecting and responding to violence against children.
* In Nicaragua, WV contributed to building capacities of local justice systems so that they can adequately handle incidents of violence against children, including CEFM. This capacity building included integrating child and family themes in the guidelines and five year training plan for justice facilitators and local justice workers. WV trained 200 local judges, 3 magistrates and 18 supervisors, which cascaded down to 2,400 local justice workers. These actions benefited 127,119 children directly and 1,295,659 children indirectly.
* In Ghana, WV strengthened 23 child protection committees at district level and 200 at community level. Each district committee is made up of a minimum of 15 members, representing a total of 345 institutions, departments and agencies with a stake in child protection. Child protection committees exist in all communities where WV operates and provide immediate reporting venues and a conduit for referral of child marriage issues to local authorities, such as police. They rescued over 20 girls from marriage, referring cases to appropriate institutions for further investigation and prosecution.

**7. What research has been conducted on married girls, including widow girls and women?**

In October 2021 WV conducted a *“Literature Review–For the listening to Child Brides Research”*, looking at the impact of child marriage on the health outcomes, educational attainment, violence in the home and the agency of adolescent married girls. This research is instrumental to help to nuance policy decision making at the national level, shape effective interventions at the local level and create space for the voices of adolescent married girls in the policy arena at all levels.

**8. Please share any examples of national reports on CEFM submitted to relevant international treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review, and national voluntary reviews conducted through the high-level political forum on sustainable development?**

In July 2020, WV supported 10 governments to prioritise children and their protection in their Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports presented at the UN’s annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). WV convened five side events and co-hosted 12 others with partners from child-focused agencies such as UNICEF, civil society and faith communities. WV mobilised members of the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children to act collectively at a country level and support government reporting on violence-related targets. Thirteen of the 21 countries where WV works made direct reference to their efforts to end violence against children in their VNR reports.

**In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:**

**9. Please share data and evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the trend of child, early and forced marriage.**

* According to initial anecdotal reports, in 2020 WV’s staff responded to more-than double the number of child marriages, compared with the same period last year.[[10]](#endnote-11)
* In an assessment drawn from conversations with children and families across nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region between April and June 2021, 82% of the married children wed after the beginning of the pandemic.[[11]](#endnote-12)
* Although schools have reopened in many developed countries following vaccine rollouts, two-thirds of children in the Asia-Pacific region reported that their schools were still closed, and 40% were not attending school in any way, including remotely.[[12]](#endnote-13)
* WV spoke in North West Syria with 626 adolescent girls and boys, families, caregivers and community leaders to increase the understanding of the impact of child marriage on their lives.[[13]](#endnote-14) Every single girl interviewed shared living in fear of being raped and sexually assaulted. 86% of all respondents reported that child marriage has increased to an alarming level in Syria as a consequence of protracted conflict, exacerbated by Covid-19 pandemic.[[14]](#endnote-15)
* WV conducted a global survey, where adolescents were asked how their lives had been affected by the pandemic, 82% said that COVID-19 had adversely affected their education; 67% also said it had affected their ability to socialise with friends; 81% talked about violence, including child marriage, in their homes, online and in their communities.[[15]](#endnote-16)
* The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly restricted movement and contact, potentially limiting opportunities for cases of child marriage or child abuse to be detected and reported.[[16]](#endnote-17)

The data analysis from WV’s desk research on child marriage drivers and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, carried out in Ghana, Ethiopia, India and Zimbabwe includes Youth Healthy Behaviour Surveys from 14,964 children and youth aged 12-18 years. Based on the findings[[17]](#endnote-18):

* a child who experienced hunger in the four weeks prior to the survey is 60% more likely to be married than his or her peers who did not. This increase, combined with the global increase of almost 12 million children living in crisis levels of hunger[[18]](#endnote-19) from 2019 to 2020, could mean an additional 3.3 million children married by age 18.[[19]](#endnote-20)
* a child’s ladder of satisfaction score is significantly associated with a child’s marital status (p<0.001). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, unmarried children were likely to rate their lives much higher (thriving) than their married peers. This finding was most significant in India where a child in the struggling category was 2.3 times more likely to be married than children in the thriving category.
* children who are currently attending school are significantly less likely to be married (p<0.001). Within WV’s sample, children who are not presently in school are 3.4 times more likely to be married than their peers.
* as caregiver support and encouragement increases, it significantly decreases the likelihood of an adolescent being married (p<0.001). Comparing boys and girls, boys were significantly more likely (p<0.05) to report that caregivers support and encourage them, provide them with necessities (p<0.01) and that the caregiver buys the child things (p<0.01).

**10. What measures are taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on girls and women survivors of CEFM and at risk?**

Across WV’s operation worldwide the adaptations were made to the current projects delivery, incorporating global response actions. Few highlights include:

* In Bangladesh, through Nobo Jatra project 12,869 participants received one-time cash transfers of US$36 to meet immediate household needs. Sharing mobile phone messages about risks, prevention and support available to address gender-based violence and child marriage were a key part of the COVID-19 response. 48,068 pregnant and young mothers were reached.
* In Senegal, WV drew on its strong collaboration with faith leaders to reach over 100,000 families. WV trained faith leaders on the virus, how to protect themselves and their congregations and how to provide psychosocial support to children, families and communities. The Teams working with each faith leader mobilised communities to raise awareness of increased risks to children, including CEFM, reaching 107,400 households and 751,800 children.[[20]](#endnote-21)

II. **1. Measures implemented to ensure accountability at the community and national levels, including the applicable legal framework, policies and programmes.**

In 39 countries, WV use its Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) [social accountability](https://www.wvi.org/our-work/socialaccountability) model to open dialogue between local government and citizens and create spaces to address the delivery of government services related to protecting children from violence.

* In Ethiopia, CVA was used to facilitate access to birth certificates for children to help address the challenge of child marriage. Officials in the district of Woreda were convinced of the need to timely issue birth certification and allocate necessary budget. As a result, 108 marriage arrangements went through rigorous investigations and 5 of them were cancelled.
* In Tanzania, CVA meetings with key government leaders resulted in construction of new rooms in Engarooji School, thus resolving the issue of overcrowded classrooms, which is one of the factors motivating girls to stay in school.
* In Bangladesh, WV initiated a formative research in July-October 2021, aiming at understanding how CVA application influenced the services provided by Child Affairs Desks of local police stations. CVA application improved the relationships between the public and police, promoting the positive image of police officers. This led to an increased openness of people to report on VAC, including on incidents of CEFM.

**3. Statistical data on the enforcement of legal measures**

In 2021 WV launched its [*It takes a world* National EVAC Policy](https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/reports/ec2677fc-89bf-4ae6-b07a-cbc13d831998/ReportSection056d2b04f8950ad92009?ctid=b951e030-af38-40d7-bd0b-fbed3c87653a&bookmarkGuid=Bookmark841fd1fa9d39b9157460) Dashboard as a new evidence tool and a step towards strengthening WV’s evidence footprint on policy gaps and successes to end violence against children. The Dashboard presents quantitative scores that measure a national government’s legal and policy compliance with specific articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children. Built using 2019 policy data from 23 countries, the Dashboard offers WV offices real-time policy data and analysis of national government commitments to end violence against children, including CEFM.

1. World Vision (June 2019-September 2020) [It takes a world: Global Campaign Progress Report](https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/it-takes-world/it-takes-world-global-campaign-progress-report) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. In February 2017, WV launched an external Partnership-wide Campaign entitled *It Takes a World to End Violence against Children (ITAW)* to impact the lives of millions of the most vulnerable children and to make a significant contribution towards ending violence against children in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. World Vision (2019) [“Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies.”](https://www.wvi.org/maternal-newborn-and-child-health/healthy-timing-and-spacing-pregnancies) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. WV *Channels of Hope (CoH)* is applied globally for transforming and mobilising faith communities to address harmful traditional practices toward children, to support and advocate for children’s rights, to become better child protectors and to ultimately strengthen the local child protection system. WV *Citizen Voice and Action (CVA)* social accountability tool helps communities understand their legal rights and mobilises advocacy groups to hold the government accountable. WV *Celebrating Families* evidence-based practice equips parents, caregivers and families with knowledge and skills to create a safe and nurturing environment in raising children. WV *Community Change* arranges for sustained, facilitated social dialogue about complex issues to take place over the course of a year, allowing communities to transform attitudes and mobilize action on harmful and discriminatory practices. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. The Nobo Jatra (“New Beginning”) project is implemented by World Vision in partnership with Winrock International, the World Food Program and Government of Bangladesh under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, addressing the root causes and driving factors of child marriage. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Project data has shown that the proportion of participants who think men and women should share household responsibilities has increased by 45% from the baseline and the number of men who think women should be consulted about household budgeting and purchases has increased by 36%. As part of the Male Engagement component, fathers are encouraged to support their daughters’ education and wait until their daughters are at least 18 to consider a consensual marriage with a man who will respect and value her. (Nobo Jatra project in Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://www.wvb-nobojatra.org/2017/01/23/gender/>) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.wvi.org/stories/uganda/household-clustering-approach-enhances-home-based-learning> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. <https://www.wvi.org/stories/afghanistan/faith-leaders-forum-support-communities-end-child-marriage> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. World Vision (May 2021) [“Breaking the Chain: Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\Breaking%20the%20Chain_digital%20(1).pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. World Vision (May 2021) [“Breaking the Chain: Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\Breaking%20the%20Chain_digital%20(1).pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. World Vision (September 2021) [“Unmasking the Impact of COVID-19 on Asia’s Most Vulnerable Children.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\COVID_Unmasking%20II%20-%20Childhood%20Lost.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. World Vision (September 2021) [“Unmasking the Impact of COVID-19 on Asia’s Most Vulnerable Children.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\COVID_Unmasking%20II%20-%20Childhood%20Lost.pdf) Refers to a survey in WV operational areas of 9 countries (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. World Vision (March 2020) “North West Syria Gender Analysis: A Comprehensive Gender and Age Analysis for the Northwest Syria Humanitarian Response” [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. World Vision (June 2020) [“Stolen Future: War and Child Marriage in Northwest Syria”](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Stolen%20Future-War%20and%20Child%20Marriage%20in%20Northwest%20Syria-Online.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. World Vision (2020) [“Act Now: Experiences and recommendations of girls and boys on the impact of COVID-19.”](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/WV-GLOBAL-ActNowReport-Final_small.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. World Vision (September 2021) [“Unmasking the Impact of COVID-19 on Asia’s Most Vulnerable Children.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\COVID_Unmasking%20II%20-%20Childhood%20Lost.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. World Vision (2021) [“How COVID-19’s impact on hunger and education is forcing children into marriage.”](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/COVID-19%20and%20child%20marriage_v3.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. Used levels of hunger – IPC3 (Crisis) or above as a proxy for going to bed hungry. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. World Vision (2021) [“How COVID-19’s impact on hunger and education is forcing children into marriage.”](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/COVID-19%20and%20child%20marriage_v3.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. World Vision (2021) [“Breaking the Chain: Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond.”](file:///C:\FY2022\UN%20report%20WV%20contribution\Reports%20to%20review%20for%20CEFM\Breaking%20the%20Chain_digital%20(1).pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-21)